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*Journal*  
JOURNAL  
OF THE  
LIFE  
*1773*  
AND  
TRAVELS  
OF

JOSEPH-BILL PACKER.

Now under sentence of DEATH in the CITY-HALL  
of *Albany*,

Written by himself, and published at his Request.

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A  
JOURNAL,  
OF THE  
LIFE and TRAVELS  
OF  
JOSEPH-BILL PACKER.

*To the Printers.*

GENTLEMEN,

**W**HEREAS I am now under sentence of death in the City-Hall of Albany, for having as it is supposed, counterfeited the currency of this province; and having scrutinized my conscience, which beareth witness to the truth of what I shall now deliver, of my own free will, which I hope will be published according to my desire.

If I were to write the whole of my transactions they would fill a large volume; but in this my journal, I only mean to give a concise and true narrative of my proceedings.

I was born in Connecticut, at a place called Groton, near New-London, in the Year 1720. My parents were reputable people, who, both by example and precept, endeavoured to inculcate principles of virtue and honor in me. From my youth I have been an admirer of the operations of nature, and never desisted from enquiring  
into



into any thing that I thought an arcanum until I had obtained some idea of it, my thirst after knowledge being insatiable.

When I arrived at the twenty second year of my age, my inclination prompted me to visit the southern colonies, I traveled into Virginia, where I resided near sixteen years : The principal part of my business was curing cancers ; of this art I may justly call myself master, as I have cured every species of them except the sanguine cancer, and even that some times when the blood was not too much infected. I understand the separation of metals, and was often called upon to examine minerals. In Virginia, Colonel Cheswell, who had lead mines, employed me to work upon lead and copper ore : He died, and Colonel James Bird, who became sole owner of the mines, declined having them worked. From these works, which are situate at a place called New-River, near the line which divides North Carolina from Virginia, I went to Dan River, which I crossed and came to a place called Salisbury, in Roan county, North-Carolina. After spending a few days there I steered my course to Meclinburgh, which lies upon the Calava River. This seemed to be a good place for my business ; and, as the county was young and the court house then building, I resolved to make that the place of my residence.

HAVING agreed for my board and lodging, and being informed that several persons in the neighbourhood were afflicted with cancers, I published an advertisement, the purport of which was, that I would undertake to cure them, and if I did not succeed, no money should be demanded. This had the desired effect, for in a few days I had several patients.

THE first that I cured was Colonel Lewison, of a cancer in his lip ; the second, the Widow Canada, who had been grievously afflicted for four years with a cancer near  
her



her nose ; the next was one James Mac, he had been distressed with a cancer for upwards of twenty two years, and was, indeed, a miserable spectacle to look upon ; three months elapsed before I could cure him. I cannot forbear relating an incident that happened to this man while he was my patient : After I caused the cancer to fall out, and the place nearly healed, a cow broke into his corn-field which put him in a violent passion ; he loaded a pistol almost full with powder and salt, went into the field to frighten the cow, and snapped the pistol several times, but it missing fire, he held it carelessly in his hand ; however, some sparks having remained in the pan, it went off at a time when he did not expect it ; the cock flew up, cut his under lip two thirds off, struck through his nose, and broke up the cancer : I was obliged to sew his lip and heal that wound, which required nearly as much time as the cancer had done. This happened in Tryon County, near Broad River, that falls into Santee on the south border of North Carolina.

IN that country I became acquainted with several gentlemen, who desired me to make their houses my home, when I came near them ; they declared it should not cost me any money if I would tarry with them all that winter. —I accepted their kind invitation ; and, as I understand watch work, I constantly employed myself at that business, unless when called abroad.

\* IN that situation I remained several years, but having a strong desire to visit my brethren in New-England, I made application to my patients, and got in part of the money they owed to me ; those who could not pay I did not distress, nor would I accept of any reward from those persons who required my help and were in low circumstances, being always apprehensive that if I accepted a fee it might disenable them to provide necessaries for their children ; nor did I turn away poor people who applied to me for help. but constantly exerted my abilities for their relief.

WHILE

WHILE I remained in North Carolina, at the house of a gentleman who was a Justice of the peace, there came a poor woman driving a cow before her ; my landlord enquiring where she was driving the cow, she answered, to the doctor, that it was the last she had, and that her children must now be deprived of milk. I asked what was her disorder ; she replied a cancer in her nose ; I desired to see it, and to know how long she had been in the doctor's hands ; she said (to the best of my remembrance) a year or a year and a half. My landlord informed me that she was a poor widow who lived about four miles distant from his house ; that her name was Clark, and that she had a great many poor naked children. My heart then felt a melting charity for the distressed widow :—I told her, that with the assistance of God, I would cure her, and desired her call upon me when she returned from the doctor. She complied, and I applied my medicine, and told her, that by the time she got home the cancer would drop out, which accordingly happened, and in less than three weeks she was perfectly cured. The poor creature was willing to give me all she had in the world, but I would accept of nothing ; for God gave me the cure, not to oppress widows, or make fatherless children cry for bread, but to relieve the afflicted ; and this duty corresponds with my natural disposition.

In the month of September, 1770, I began my journey into from North Carolina, to New-England. No remarkable event happened in my travels until I came to Wyoming, on Susquehanna, where I found several of my relations, but we did not know each other till I told them my name ; then they remembered that they had heard their fathers speak of me. Upon the road to Wyoming, I had obtained intelligence that a company of Pennsylvanians were coming to drive off the settlers there ; and, as I always was a lover of my countrymen, I warned them of the approaching danger.

At Wyoming I continued with my relations four days,  
and

and the proceeded on my journey to Delaware River there I was informed that Captain Ogden and his party had marched to East-Town, after having waited for some time to intercept such New-Englanders as might pass between Susquehanna and Maryland. There was a man and a woman with me; the man's name was John Wickifine, we were and resolved not to be imposed upon whatever the event. We went on unmolested, came to a Ferry, and crossed Hudson-River, we travelled on a post road until we arrived at De Bois's Tavern, there we continued two days, as my companion Wickifine wanted to hire a house for himself and family, but the landlord and him could not agree upon the terms. At this Tavern I met with one Doctor Smith, he informed me that he lived near Groton River, and that he had been at New-York upon affairs of importance: He was a man of affability and a good orator; we entered into an argument, and I found him to be a man of sense and learned in the sciences. I was so charmed with his discourses upon philosophy, that I could have spent the remainder of my days with him: He desired me to ride along with him, I complied, and the subject of our conversation was nature, the productions of nature, and the primary causes of such surprising effects. The Doctor conducted me to his own house, which was a tavern, and there I lodged that night: During the evening we talked about various matters, but not a word was mentioned about counterfeiting money. Among other things our conversation turned upon the transmutation of metals; the Doctor told me that he was master of that art, but that his extensive practice of physick would not permit him to prosecute his discoveries in alchemy. I informed him that I intended to begin a course of experiments if I could get a convenient place to carry it on the process: He recommended me to Capt. Hard of New-Millford who, he said, had for several years been carrying on operations of that nature.

HAVING

no taken leave of Doctor Smith, I proceeded  
 Willford, enquired for Capt. Hard, and was very  
 received by him ; I found him to be a gen-  
 of honor and integrity, and I had a very cor-  
 him.

I remained long there until I received a visit  
 Smith ; he requested that I would cut his  
 pens, which he told me he wanted to put into his  
 as, and gave me a precedent that was done in England.  
 I cut the plate and sent it to him by one David Thar,  
 whom he sent to receive it ; soon after the Doctor favour-  
 ed me with another visit, and after a long prefatory dis-  
 course, informed me that he wanted more work done, and  
 that if I would take it in hand to execute it I should be  
 handsomely rewarded. I enquired what he wanted en-  
 graved, he said he would show me a pattern, and soon  
 after brought me a ten shilling bill and asked if I could  
 imitate it ; I answered him in the affirmative, but told him  
 I did not choose to do such work, being then engaged in  
 philosophic studies : I represented to him the enormity  
 of the crime, and endeavoured to dissuade him from per-  
 sisting in it : his reply was, that the great men are guilty  
 of greater frauds, and that for his part he did not mean  
 to enrich himself by emitting a large number of bills, his  
 principal motive being curiosity to know how near he  
 could imitate the true bill. I told him it was impossible  
 to do it so exact as not to be distinguishable from the  
 genuine bill : He said that a little difference was not  
 material, with sundry other words to that effect. Capt.  
 Hard, understanding his errand, gave him a sharp re-  
 primand, and told me that if I worked for the Doctor  
 I should not stay one hour longer in his house : I promis-  
 ed that I would not, but one word brought on another,  
 we differed, and I left him.—Oh ! unhappy day !—for  
 having no overseer to watch for my good I met again  
 with Mr. Smith ; who, taking advantage of my weak  
 capacity, debauched my judgment with sophistical rea-  
 soning and made me err.

ANXIOUS



ANXIOUS to improve myself by philosophic studies, naturally inclined to learning, remarkably inquisitive about the secrets of nature and science, I travelled to Saratoga, with an intention to set up my works; and accordingly built a shop for that purpose at the house of John Davis. I agreed with Capt. Garrison to bring me stills, glasses, and other materials from New-York. When these things arrived I prepared to begin my operations, but a misunderstanding happening between the woman of the house and me, I resolved to leave that place.

I went down to New-Britain, but it being the winter season and the cold very intense, I could not erect my works, but embraced that opportunity to transcribe my philosophy book, which I did at the house of Samuel Wheeler.

As I understood that Doctor Whiting kept potters works, and having occasion for some earthen stills, I went to his house and gave him directions about them; it required some time before they could be finished; and in the interim I employed myself in preparing medicines at Samuel Wheeler's house.

I went again to Doctor Whiting's, expecting my stills were done, but found they were not. This circumstance retarded my business, and because I applied closely to my studies and spent the greatest part of my time in my shop, a report was circulated about the country that I was counterfeiting bills and coining money. I declare, before God! that the said report, was *false*! for I did not make nor offer to pass any bad money, nor never had any thoughts on that subject. Conscious of my innocence, I gave myself no trouble about their surmises, until I heard that they had applied for and obtained a warrant, either at Kinderhook or Clavarack, against me. This made me very uneasy and confirmed my determination of abandoning a place where the people were so censorious and malicious. I then

I then resolved upon a recluse way of life, and erected a house in a solitary place, where intended to carry on my chymical process; but having made an excursion from my habitation, I met with one Hulburt; who informed me that he had been long searching for me, and that he was employed by Daniel Lewis of Sheffield.

WHEN he acquainted me with his business, I told him that nothing could induce me to be concerned in his Scheme; that being now an old man, and my eye-sight much decayed, I had given over engraving nice work; and that being then engaged in other business, I had neither time nor inclination to comply with his requisition; but he persisted to persuade and make me large offers.

I am now tried, convicted and condemned, on suspicion of having counterfeited the currency of this province; but, if the word of a dying man can be taken, I am innocent of the crime imputed to me. I never did make, sign or pass counterfeit Bills; nor had I any hand in the scheme further than what I have related. In my manner of living I always studied not to give offence, even to Children; and as I practiced no deceit, it never occurred to me that others would use it. In the days of plenty Gold and Silver was not too precious for me; but no sooner did adversity appear, than those whom I formerly imagined to be my best friends, having obtained their ends and glutted their mischievous appetites; they compassed me about like a troubled sea, and having the poison of asps under their tongues they have done their utmost to destroy their fellow creatures in hopes to clear their own characters. Alas! the strongest castle may be taken when besieged by superior force; and if a man is assailed by large offers and insinuation, it is not surprising if he surrenders, especially if his poverty and good nature are taken the advantage of. By over persuasion I endeavoured, to gratify those who are now cleared and have got  
that

their pardon, but it plainly appeareth that I never coined, dispersed, nor passed one penny of bad money ; but it seems that I must be an *Escape Goat* to bear their transgressions into the other world. LORD strengthen me to bear their burden in this world, and be merciful to my soul in that which is to come.

As it is appointed for all men once to die, and it seems that the time of my dissolution draweth near, I desire that these my transactions may be published for the satisfaction of the public ; for that reason, Messrs. Printers, I have sent these manuscripts to you ; print them with all convenient speed, and you will greatly oblige your humble servant,

JOSEPH BILL P-----.

*City Hall, Albany, March 9, 1773.*





Messrs. ROBERTSONS,

SINCE I wrote the preceeding pages, I have recollected the following material occurrences of my Life, which you will be pleased to add as a postscript to what I formerly sent. I would most willingly communicate my recipe for curing cancers to the world, but I have very strong reasons, to be silent on that topic; I am very sorry that this is the case, for, notwithstanding the hardships put upon me, my heart is warm with universal good will and benevolence to my fellow creatures.

I am,

Gentlemen,

City-Hall, Albany,

your's, &amp;c.

March 16, 1773.

J. B. P.

## POSTSCRIPT.

IN the course of my peregrinations through Virginia, I came to a certain gentleman's house which I made my home for upwards of four years. During that time I became acquainted with one of his daughters, and at last we thought proper, and indeed it was high time, to marry; accordingly we entered into the connubial state. About half a year after, my wife and me held a consultation upon the posture of our affairs; and, after a good deal of confabulation, we concluded that living with her parents did not suit our convenience. I proposed to go and seek a place that would be more agreeable to us, and observed to my wife, that as I had two good horses, she might, if she pleased, take a ride along with me;

she acquiesced, and, having made some necessary preparations for our journey, we set off together.

We rode about eighty miles up into the country, and came to a quaker settlement called Opechen Creek, where we put up at a friend's house; the gentleman was extremely civil, and we discoursed very jocosely together. He asked where we were journeying:—we answered, to seek our fortune, and enquired if they wanted to hire a School-master at that settlement? He said they did, and would be very fond of a good one. His reply pleased me exceeding well, and we determined to abide with them; the freinds being a very good people to live with, especially if they find that those whom they employ are honest and have merit.

I engaged with them a year. They built a house for me and my wife, and a school-house adjacent. When the buildings were finished, the brothers and sisters, as they call them, presented us with every utensil necessary for house keeping. We then made as respectable an appearance as any of our neighbours. I opened my school, went on extraordinary well, and had the universal applause of my constituents.

GENERAL BRADDOCK'S defeat happening about four months after our settlement at Opechen, threw a damp upon our happiness; I was in my school house when the sad news arrived; the whole settlement was alarmed, being apprehensive that the victors would follow their blow and ravage the country with fire and sword. I still continued my school, but, in about two months after, the murder shout was heard in our neighbourhood; numbers of people were killed and scalped, and the miserable fugitives who escaped with life were at a loss where to fly for protection! At last I was obliged to abandon my happy settlement, and, with my wife, repair to a fort; there we remained near two months, but the place being much crowded, by the multitude who came there for protection and we having our two horses with us, made it very incmodious for us to stay there. My wife and me came to a resolution to leave the  
fort

fort, and not choosing to settle again in a country so open to the incursions of a merciless enemy, we prepared for a journey into the province of Pennsylvania; we arrived safe there, rented a room, and I resumed my practice of surgery and curing cancers. I had surprising good success, and obtained the name of an experienced practitioner in physic, but the tide of fortune again turned and set hard against me; I caught the infection of the small-pox; the eruption was copious and the symptoms very unfavourable. I entreated my wife to leave my room and keep at a distance from me, but her tenderness for me would not permit her to comply with my request. I was under violent apprehensions, that if she got infected, in the condition she was then in, that the consequence would be fatal. Alas! my imaginary distress was very soon realized; she sickened, the pultes appeared, and on the sixteenth day of her illness, to my inexpressible grief, expired.

I had a boy three years of age, who was dangerously ill of the same distemper that had been fatal to his mother; at the same time, I was not sufficiently recovered to quit my bed; my situation was truly pitiable, I was sick, dejected, and forlorn, among strangers; my expence for attendance, nursing, and indeed I may say for every thing, amounted to a considerable sum, and I was then in a place where something could not be had for nothing.

UPON my recovery I proposed to visit my old friends the Quakers, but hearing that times were altered, much for the worse, in their settlement, I declined it. Having agreed with an old welch widow for my boy's board and lodging, I continued my practice of surgery and had tolerable success. As soon as my boy was able to go, I sent him to school, and he became a very good scholar——I fervently implore the Almighty to preserve, govern and bless him.

THE War still continuing, I was, by the recommendation of several gentlemen who interested themselves in my behalf, appointed surgeon's mate to the garrison of Augusta; there I continued until a detachment of our men were draughted to go against Fort Du Quesne; our principal doctor went with them, but before his departure he wrote to the commissioners in my behalf, without informing me of the favour he had conferred upon

upon me. In consequence of his recommendation I was sent for to Philadelphia, and there received a commission to be cheif surgeon to the garrison of Augusta; at the same time I got a chest of medicings and then went back to my station, where I continued seven years. At the conclusion of the war I was discharged at Lancaster, in Pennsylvania: Being then out of employment, I went down to Virginia to visit my father in law, and continued in these parts. My transactions, after that time, I have mentioned in my Journal, to which I refer the reader hereof.

I would willingly write a more minute detail of the various vicissitudes of my life; which would make a large volume, but my time is much too short for such an undertaking; if I could obtain a Reprieve for two months, the work might be finished. What time I can spare, from my more weighty concerns, shall be devoted to the above purpose; and if my sentence is executed, at the time appointed, I shall leave what manuscripts I have, in the hands of the Printers hereof.

When from this World I take my Flight,  
To Fields and Regions of Delight;  
My cruel Foes need not Exult,  
For they'll be punish'd for their Fault.

And those who brought on my Distress,  
Will never Taste of Happiness;  
Sunk in Despair and lost to Hope,  
Their only Remedy's a Rope.

Me quite unwary, for their ~~Sake~~,  
Put Character and Life to Stake;  
Deceiv'd, I did the Law transgress;  
Words cannot utter my Distress.

I from a Brother ask'd relief,  
He only laugh'd at my Grief;  
Oh! may no Brother in Distress,  
Be forc'd to ask of him Redress!

To Bliss they can have no Pretence,  
Whose Heart disclaims Benevolence;  
To me the Needy welcome were,  
I gave them what I had to spare.

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